



MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: May 6, 2011

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing, May 11, 2011: Permitting Update; Priority Green Permitting and Green Development

Permitting Update:

Permit Volumes and Values

In the first four months of 2011, we took in 2,256 construction applications with a total value of \$396.5 million. For the same period in 2010, we took in fewer applications (2,004), but with a significantly higher value (\$608.9 million). Although the intake value is below 2010, the month of April was fairly strong with over \$125 million. We are also aware of a few large projects that we expect to come in later in the year, so hope to reach our budgeted revenue goal for the year. It is difficult to determine if there is a trend toward recovery yet.

MUP applications are continuing at a pace similar to last year. We have received 115 applications compared with 120 applications for the same period last year. If this continues, we will take in approximately 350 applications this year, which is still far below what we think of as a “normal” year of around 700 applications, and less than a third of what we took in during 2007, at the height of the boom, when we received 1,121 applications.

Intake Appointments

You may have heard about this; it has been challenging to cover all our services with current resources, particularly in a few key areas. We have recently been having difficulty meeting our intake appointment times. Our intake appointments have stretched to as much as 8-9 weeks out. To help meet our customers’ needs, we recently added 25% more in-person appointments to the calendar and also added some extra electronic plan submittal appointments. Our intake supervisors are working directly with customers to adjust appointment schedules whenever possible. We’ve had a very high number of telecommunications facilities-related applications as



several networks build out their 4G systems; this has had a significant adverse impact on scheduling.

Review Targets for April

We are struggling to meet our targets for the 2-week initial review projects. We have recently authorized some overtime in an effort to improve performance.

- 48 hour initial review (goal = 80%) 87%
- 2 week initial review (goal = 80%) 46% [73% within 3 weeks; 92% within 4 weeks]
- 8 week initial review (goal = 70%): 83%

Priority Green Overview

DPD has developed a range of permitting incentives under Priority Green, streamlining sustainable development. Priority Green incentives support Seattle's maturing green building marketplace and promote innovative sustainable development. The aim is to increase the number of sustainably built projects by offering expedited permit review, support for innovation and facilitation. The program is categorized into three areas:

Priority Green Expedited, the most popular option for applicants seeking building permits, results in faster review times for projects that demonstrate established green building standards and meld well with existing code. Priority Green Expedited is available for new Single Family, Multifamily and Non-Residential projects. All Priority Green Expedited projects are expected to be 15% more energy efficient than 2009 Seattle Energy Code, use 20% less water by using WaterSense Fixtures and recycle 75% of their construction and demolition debris. Single Family and Townhomes must conserve resources by limiting dwelling unit size to 2200 square feet. Projects can meet the Priority Green requirements by building to a Built Green 4 or 5 Star level or to a LEED Gold or Platinum level. DPD also has an alternative path available to Single Family and Townhome projects that are not participating in either LEED or Built Green.

The eligibility requirements for Priority Green Expedited were adjusted on March 1, 2011 to align with the *2009 Seattle Energy Code*, to keep pace with capabilities in the design and construction industry, and to encourage greater resource efficiency.

Priority Green Facilitated supports innovative projects with potential code challenges with an integrated, coordinated response. All projects that meet DPD criteria for Innovative Projects or participate in the Living Building Pilot are eligible. The facilitated program primarily assists larger projects with complex permitting issues.

Priority Green TOOLS provide additional code incentives and policies to assist applicants developing green buildings. Available resources include:

- Innovation Advisory Committee: A technical advisory group that provides a pre-application venue to develop solutions collaboratively to issues raised by innovative energy efficiency proposals that are not addressed by the current code.
- Incentive Zoning: A voluntary provision available in Downtown, Midrise and Highrise zones that provides more development potential in exchange for certain features specified by zone or development type; in addition to a LEED standard, may include affordable housing, on-site public amenities, open space, green streets or historic preservation.

- **Residential Deconstruction:** A permitting option that provides contractors and developers greater opportunities to salvage reusable building material from housing that is being demolished.

Priority Green Expedited Incentives and Eligible Projects

Applications that are eligible for the expedited program are new complex construction permits that ordinarily take 8 weeks for initial plan review. This may include single family, townhouses, multifamily and commercial projects. Additions and alterations, over the counter (STFI), simple single family and other quick review projects that have initial plan review targets of 48 hours and 2 weeks, are not included in the expedited program.

STANDARD PRODUCTION GOALS		PRIORITY GREEN PRODUCTION GOALS	
Target	Percent meeting IP target	Target	Percent meeting IP target
		4 weeks ¹	95%
		6 weeks ²	95%
8 weeks	80%		
¹ 4 weeks for applications reviewed under the Seattle Residential Code (SRC) ² 6 weeks for applications reviewed under the Seattle Building Code (SBC)			

Program Statistics

Priority Green Expedited for Single Family and Townhouses launched October 1, 2009.

To date, Expedited includes 23 projects or 10% of all permit applications for single family and townhouse projects.

- Complete- 1
- Under Construction- 14
- Under Review- 8

Priority Green Expedited for Multifamily and Commercial launched November 1, 2010.

- DPD has received only 10 commercial or multifamily permit applications since November 1, 2010.
- None of these applications were submitted as Priority Green Expedited.

Priority Green Facilitated launched July 2008.

To date, Facilitated includes 14 projects;

- Complete- 3
- Under Construction- 1
- Under Review- 5
- Inactive- 5

Living Building Pilot ordinance effective January 20, 2010.

- DPD has received one application for a living building, the Cascadia Center for Sustainable Design and Construction. The project will be one of the first living building office buildings in the world. The Master Use Permit has been issued and the building permit is under review. To allow for a solar array in the right of way, the project will be petitioning for a term permit with SDOT.

LEED & Built Green

The Priority Green program was developed to incentivize higher levels of green building. While there has been a significant upturn in LEED and Built Green projects in the past five years, the number of those projects at the higher levels of achievement is still quite small.

LEED for New Construction (applies to commercial and multifamily projects 4 stories or higher)

In 2010 there were 16 total LEED NC projects certified. Only 6 of these projects achieved LEED Gold ratings. None achieved LEED Platinum. Only 1 of those projects, the Greenbridge Early Learning Center, would have fit the criteria for Priority Green Expedited. The others, Fire Stations 28 & 35 and three University of Washington projects already receive special attention through separate DPD MOA's.

LEED for Homes Multifamily Midrise (applies to multifamily projects of 4 – 6 stories)

The rating system became available in October of 2010. No projects have yet been certified.

Built Green Multi-Family (applies to multifamily projects)

Seven multi-family projects were certified Built Green in 2010 with either 2 or 3-Star ratings. None achieved a 4 or 5-Star rating.

LEED for Homes (applies to single-family and townhome projects)

In 2010, 1 townhome project (8 units) achieved LEED for Homes certification. The project achieved a Platinum rating.

Built Green Single Family (applies to single-family and townhome projects)

Thirty single family and townhome projects were certified Built Green in 2010. Of those, 18 projects achieved 4-Star and 9 projects achieved 5-Star ratings.

Program Status and 2011-2012 Work Plan

Our priority is to provide the appropriate customer service promised through Priority Green and to properly maintain the program (e.g. continuous improvements on the Priority Green permitting process, developing appropriate outreach materials and marketing the program). In addition, we are developing an evaluation process to track the effectiveness of Priority Green. Staffing levels dedicated to green permitting were reduced by half since 2010. As such, no changes or additions to the program are anticipated in 2011 or 2012.

Evaluation of Expedited Permitting

DPD is evaluating the permits that have taken advantage of the incentives. The evaluation will create success measures for the program so that City Green Building can report out regularly on

program status/effectiveness and provide ongoing program adjustments as the green building industry evolves. Part of this evaluation will be in-depth case study review of select projects and a focus group discussion of the applicants who have participated in the program.

Outreach, Pre-application and Coaching Services

City Green Building staff is continuing to reach out to applicants to remind them that permit incentives are available for green buildings. We are assessing ways to optimize the assistance we can provide during coaching and pre-submittal conferences. Part of this strategy is to broaden the staff participation to include permitting staff beyond the two half-time positions dedicated to Priority Green. This is partly a necessity due to resource levels, but also an opportunity to better integrate the program into the Operations Division of DPD.

Seattle 2030 District

DPD has been awarded an EPA Climate Showcase grant for a 2030 District. As part of that grant work, City Green Building staff will be developing streamlined permitting services for district properties, with a focus on assisting projects making energy efficient renovations. The streamlined permitting incentives developed for the 2030 District will help to inform future Priority Green program changes.